

The finance role: Underpinning the transformation agenda

Spring 2006



About the Authority Forum



The Authority Forum is a quarterly focus group event for senior public sector executives involved in improving service delivery and efficiency at the local level. Selected delegates are drawn from progressive local authorities as well as central government and industry analysts, to discuss and debate a current public sector issue in depth and to develop recommendations for progress.

Taking part in the Authority Forum provides the opportunity to discuss opinions and ideas on key issues with peers. Delegates can position their organisation as a thought leader on priority areas at the local level and similarly can raise the profile of the programmes that they and their colleagues have been working hard to achieve.

The discussion and recommendations of the group are documented in the Authority Forum report, written by Dan Jellinek, editor of e-Government Bulletin. In addition, selected journalists were invited to listen and document any findings for their respective publications.

Contents

Executive summary	1
Discussion report	4
• The role of the modern Finance Officer	4
• The devolution revolution	5
• A problem shared is a problem solved?	6
• The private sector: A different world?	8
• The customer is always right	8
• The topsy-turvy world of fighting fraud	9
Conclusion	12
Attendees	12

Executive summary

Much has been written about the role of IT systems in helping to deliver the targets set by the Gershon efficiency review and the UK's latest Transformational Government agenda. New technologies such as mobile working and new ways of delivering improved performance, such as through shared services, are under examination across the UK as ways of boosting efficiency and effectiveness.

But it is not just the head of technology or the back office managers who will be pursuing this transformation: in all major projects, a council's director of finance will have vital input and oversight, and the finance function as a whole will underpin any work aimed at boosting efficiency or improving processes. To know whether any new IT-enabled approach is going to result in better performance or savings, the imperative is to know how much money is spent on an existing system, service or process: and that is a financial management issue.

The role of a modern finance officer in enabling service transformation to take place goes well beyond financial reporting.

The role of a modern finance officer in enabling service transformation to take place goes well beyond financial reporting. As local government moves towards greater use of shared services for administrative tasks with other councils and other bodies, a new flexibility is needed in handling budgets and making resources available to bring about the desired service outcomes without being tied to rigid departmental or organisational structures.

One way to create greater flexibility is to devolve financial responsibility to managers in different service areas, retaining a core function in the centre to carry out statutory accounting duties but giving departments a far greater say in how money is spent from day to day. This requires a new mindset at the financial centre: one of creativity, of working out how to overcome barriers and enabling progress to happen rather than simply wielding a big stick and enforcing rules.

New legislation is in the pipeline to assist this process, where current laws may be restrictive. But already, pooling of budgets and sharing of services is becoming a reality for many authorities as they seek to make efficiency savings in areas such as revenues and benefits. There are risks here: in grouping together it will be important to ensure that standards at the best performing authorities are not hampered by partners with poorer records. Also, as services are shared and often outsourced, it will be important to ensure the maximum savings are realised by shrinking support functions to reflect their new role as overseers rather than providers.

But the potential prizes are great, not just in terms of money saved but in the ability to offer citizens greatly enhanced one-stop services.

Whilst the area of benefits is highly complex, the opportunity exists to turn around traditional approaches altogether, for example transferring the administrative burden of claiming benefits from the citizen to the authority. With new technology and new approaches, it should be possible for valid claims to be captured and processed automatically, without citizens having to fill in a series of lengthy, tedious and difficult application forms.

Technology can also help to combat benefit fraud, a perennial problem for finance directors. As more and more information held on databases is linked together, checks that can highlight potentially fraudulent claims

Whilst the area of benefits is highly complex, the opportunity exists to turn around traditional approaches altogether.

become easier to make, and can eventually be built into systems and automated in powerful ways. It is far more cost-effective to pick up fraud as it is attempted than to have to prosecute and spend money on lawyers to punish fraudsters after the event.

Data protection is an issue here, although it is perhaps less of a problem than some authorities realise, and the Information Commissioner's office is generally helpful with requests relating to the fight against fraud.

Finance and IT heads will have to work hand in hand, and with other senior managers and key suppliers, to ensure the most potential is extracted from the e-government revolution.

Overall then, there is a symbiotic relationship between the development of the role of the modern council finance officer and finance function, and the transformation of government services through new technologies. Finance and IT heads will have to work hand in hand, and with other senior managers and key suppliers, to ensure the most potential is extracted from the e-government revolution.

Of course, it must always be remembered that the public sector is different to the private sector. Efficiency and savings are vital, but the public sector cannot choose its customers, and has a public service duty to all that is not shared by private companies. But as long as the public and council staff realise that efficiency gains benefit everybody, since more money can be freed up for front line services, they will support new ways of working. There is a communications job to do here: another task for the modern finance officer. But if the end result is better services and a more visible outcome from taxpayers money, no-one will object.



Key Points

- The role of the finance function in UK local government is changing as it grapples with the efficiency and service transformation agendas. Greater flexibility is needed including devolution of power to departments to enable managers to be more creative in their approach
- Finance directors need to be more proactive, to come up with business cases and challenge the way councils have traditionally done things
- The need to consider how financial burdens can be shared with other councils and public sector bodies, and what role the private sector can play, should be constantly examined
- All costs must be visible to allow informed management decisions to be made about better ways of delivery. And as far as possible, like needs to be compared with like between partner organisations
- Authorities should consider devolving financial responsibility to departments as much as possible, with a core finance function at the centre helping and working with the departments to ensure maximum efficiencies are obtained
- IT systems should allow access to the right financial and administrative information at the right time, and access to the right budgets, to support the accounting and audit process and also the business transformation process
- The future for many administrative functions such as revenues and benefits and payroll may lie in shared services. But authorities entering into shared services do not give up ultimate responsibility for their own performance, so standards must be monitored and compared with what came before
- There is still a tendency for public sector managers to think about how to spend money rather than how to save it. The public sector is different from the private sector, but nevertheless it is imperative to instil a money-saving mindset in all managers
- A one-stop convenience culture needs to dominate all customer-facing finance services, so the onus is shifted from the citizen to the council to ensure the right money is delivered at the right time
- Efficient and automated data matching must be increased to help in the fight against fraud. But to avoid a backlash against 'Big Brother' fears, education is necessary to explain the benefits, for example in holding down council tax rates

The need to consider how financial burdens can be shared with other councils and public sector bodies, and what role the private sector can play, should be constantly examined.

Discussion report

Flexibility is not a quality often associated with finance officers by their departmental managers and colleagues. And just as in central government where the Treasury is often perceived and feared as a centre of power and control, the finance function in local authorities has traditionally been perceived as an all-powerful force to be pleaded with for a bit more cash but ultimately to be obeyed, whatever its will.

Some of the reasons for this are rooted in law, and are understandable and desirable to ensure the proper running of local democracy. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires every local authority to appoint a chief finance officer with responsibility for the good financial management of the authority, reporting directly to the chief executive. This role carries with it a raft of duties, and flexibility is not one of them.

But increasingly a new mood is pervading the public sector – one of openness to cultural change, of sharing services and trying new ways of working if the end result is greater cost efficiency, a better service to citizens and a greater focus on the citizen as customer rather than the council as provider. In the process, one or two deeply-entrenched mindsets and ways of working need to be changed, and this does not always sit well with the traditional finance function of enforcement and control.

So things are changing for the modern council finance function. The government has realised this, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is reviewing local government law to see what can be done to help finance officers become more enabling of change within their councils. Like any major change, there will also be cultural problems to overcome. But the potential gains for citizens, councils and council staff are great.

At their latest meeting, Authority Forum members contemplated these issues and tried to map out the way forward for flexible finance.

The role of the modern Finance Officer

The finance officer has traditionally been seen as a rigid, if powerful, figure, tasked with ensuring good governance and seeing that everyone plays by the rules. In future, a higher degree of flexibility will be needed to enable key policies like shared services and flexible working patterns to be implemented across an authority.

Eric Woods, Director of Government Practice, Ovum, said: “The role of the finance function in UK local government is changing as it faces up to ever broader challenges. Chief among these are the Gershon efficiency agenda; the transforming government policy initiative emanating from the Cabinet Office; and the need for councils to constantly develop and update their technology infrastructure.”

David Magor, Director of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation, said: “You can go with new ways of delivering services such as partnership arrangements, but as the law stands someone has to look after the finances of the individual organisation, and finance directors carry the ultimate responsibility - they have to sign off the accounts. It is important to have in mind all the time that there is a statutory role that has to be maintained and respected. To give councils a lot more freedom, the role would have to change quite dramatically.”



“The role of the finance function in UK local government is changing as it faces up to ever broader challenges.”

Eric Woods

Keith Davis, Assistant Chief Executive at Breckland Council, added: “It is true that these days there will have to be more flexibility. If power is really vested only in the finance director and chief executive, you lose the inventiveness that can be there, because managers in other departments like social services or wherever are always hampered by the fear that they have got to go to the top to ask for money.

“The best directors of finance are not simply accountants, they are those who start to think more widely, and not just about cash. They think about ways in which services can be improved.”

Janice Morphet, formerly of the local e-government team in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, said: “There is legislation coming through to allow increased flexibility, and I don’t think any ideas are off the table. But the challenge of greater flexibility in finance and shared services in the future is going to be considerable. Its success will often boil down simply to how well individuals will work together.”

Paul Tonks, Local Government Director at Civica, said: “The role of finance officer has changed in line with a more joined-up agenda. Now it is an enabling role, looking at how a service can best be delivered. In this finance directors should always look at how to share finances with other local providers, the Police for example, and at what role the private sector can play.”

Kathryn Rowe, Programme Manager at the East of England Centre of Excellence, said: “When I worked in local government, I was alarmed that finance was viewed almost as a dirty word, and only people in the finance department itself were aware of its true role and value. My own experience is that finance is the lifeblood of any organisation: you need to have confidence in your accounts, and you need to make all costs visible so you can make informed management decisions. How can we know if there is a better way of delivering a service if we don’t know where the baseline is?”

Simon Norbury, Head of ICT at Westminster City Council, said: “Finance heads need to become more proactive, to drive a business case culture, to ask how we can do it differently, and to challenge the ways we have traditionally done things.”



“Finance is the lifeblood of any organisation: you need to have confidence in your accounts, and ... to make all costs visible.”

Kathryn Rowe

The devolution revolution

In many authorities, the new climate of flexibility will often involve some degree of devolution of the finance function from the central finance department into service departments. Managers will be given greater control over their budgets, to allow them to find more creative solutions to improving services and boosting efficiency. The centre will advise, guide and ensure core financial duties are carried out.

Simon Norbury said: “At Westminster, instead of having a central finance department that controls everything and brings all the other departments to account, financial responsibility is devolved and run independently by each department. There is still a core central function to ensure that the accounts are returned properly and so on, and to push step-change across the authority where needed. But the emphasis is on finance at the centre working hand in hand with departments. Our whole approach is a response to the Gershon agenda: by devolving the finance function, we are looking for efficiency savings.”



“It is not acceptable any more to have such high council tax rises as we have seen in the past, and the key to ensuring tax rises are controlled is performance management.”

Alan Campbell

Keith Davis said: “The devolution of the finance function to departments is a huge shift, and if you’re not careful you can end up with a series of separate fiefdoms. What it’s really about is delegating accountability as well as responsibility, so departments can’t just say point the finger if there is a problem. But there is also a need for a safety net if managers in departments are to have greater autonomy, and a need for IT systems to give access to the right information at the right time, and access to the right budgets.”

David Magor said: “More responsibility may be devolved to managers, but the problem is the centre usually stays the same size. The problem with the Best Value regime was that departments were never given the option to go elsewhere for financial services, they could not challenge the soft centre. When you talk about transactional services, why isn’t payroll a transactional service? Why haven’t you got a single payroll service for all of local government?”

Alan Campbell, Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council, said: “It is not acceptable any more to have such high council tax rises as we have seen in the past, and the key to ensuring tax rises are controlled is performance management. But performance management has to run throughout the organisation, not just at the centre. The Best Value audit process introduced in 2003 whereby all Scottish councils are audited to check they are implementing the Best Value process correctly, and achieving continuous service improvement, is also concentrating minds in this area.”

A problem shared is a problem solved?

Shared services are high on the local government management agenda at the moment, after being placed at the core of both the Gershon efficiency review and the Cabinet Office’s ‘Transformational Government’ strategy. All councils must now examine back-office services including finance to see not if, but where and how they can pool services with other authorities to secure efficiency gains.

Keith Davis said: “The future will be more local service partnerships, as long as legislation is passed to give us more freedom to pool budgets. Many departmental managers already have powers that used to go up the chain. Local authorities need to get more efficient and more effective, but managers need more control.”

Alan Campbell said: “In Scotland there are 32 unitary councils, all with the same powers, which is helpful when it comes to sharing best practice ideas and sharing services. Indeed, a further local government reorganisation is likely in Scotland in 2011 that will reduce the number of councils to maybe 20.

“In the meantime, we are looking to join finance and other services where possible between units and between councils. It has even been suggested that an individual council does not need its own chief executive or director of finance!”



“The future will be more local service partnerships, as long as legislation is passed to give us more freedom to pool budgets.”

Keith Davis

Paul Tonks said: “In a lot of our work in shared services, we find that because different authorities account differently for various activities, it is often really hard to compare how services are run. Even where everyone uses standardised account codes there is still plenty of scope to include different things for different authorities.”

Keith Davis said: “Yes, and that is why you often get back the answer, when you say that the cost per head of a certain service is different in one place to another: ‘Yes, but that’s because we account for it differently.’”

David Magor said: “There is a danger as you pull groups of local authorities together to share services, that some councils will lose out. Will sharing pull everyone down to the level of the worst performers in the group, or up to the level of the best? The likelihood is it will end up somewhere in the middle. So for some the level will go up, but for others it will go down.

“For example where councils have a very good record on council tax collection, joining with other councils with lower collection rates to share services may lower that level of performance. The money saved on administrative costs could just be lost on cash flow and performance.

“And what worries me is that in 20 years’ time when much may be merged, people will say isn’t it great? But they will have forgotten how good the performance was in the first place. If you look at the record of very large projects like tax credits and child support, you realise big isn’t always better. There is an optimum size for operational efficiency.

“Another problem with outsourcing services is that the centre never appears to get cut – it always stays the same size. It is said that central support resources are needed to manage contracts and to keep those private sector people in line. But that’s not the way to partnership success.”

Keith Davis said: “This is nothing new: if you look at when control of housing was transferred to housing associations, and when services were outsourced in large numbers under compulsory competitive tendering, the centre has never shrunk in proportion to what has gone out.”

David Magor said: “If you share services on a large scale and outsource them to a single supplier, there is a danger that you will lose a lot of the innovation currently in the system. Where there is a competitive marketplace, there is an innovation increment, with companies like Civica and Northgate competing hard to keep their systems innovative. But the more services you bring together, the more you lose that. And if you have one single centralised system, as you have say with the Department for Work and Pensions outsourcing all its IT to one company, it is much slower to adapt to new requirements. You lose the competitive edge, the domain expertise of specialist suppliers, and the need to innovate.”



“Will sharing pull everyone down to the level of the worst performers in the group, or up to the level of the best? The likelihood is it will end up somewhere in the middle.”

David Magor

The private sector: a different world?

For all the new flexibility being promised for the local government finance function, the many statutory duties of authorities mean they can never have the financial freedom of private sector companies to reallocate and reinvest money. But this does not mean they cannot learn many useful lessons from private sector mindsets and approaches.

Keith Davis said: “For all the new changes being made, there is not quite the same flexibility with money in the public sector as there is in the private sector. For example in the public sector, if you don’t use it you lose it - you can’t just bank it.”

Robert Della-Sala, Head of Revenues and Benefits at the London Borough of Hounslow, said: “In the private sector, everybody is looking at the bottom line all the time. They are not looking at how to spend money, but how to save money. In the public sector there is a need for finance to engage more with managers to impart a little of this mentality.”

David Magor said: “What people may forget when they compare the public sector with the private sector is that the public sector does not choose its customers, its customers are thrust upon it. Private sector businesses do choose their customers, and that’s why for example the banks turned away from the idea of introducing social bank accounts for everyone. This was a tragedy and a missed opportunity: all social security benefits could have been paid electronically.

“Also, legal restrictions often prevent councils from taking the most efficient actions. Homelessness is a classic example. For example, in my former authority we spent millions each year placing homeless people into private properties. We could have built new houses for that money, but that would have been capital expenditure and you can’t convert revenue spending to capital spending.

“We could never resolve this problem because we weren’t in complete control of the situation. The problem was made worse by the fact that surrounding councils placed homeless people in private accommodation in the city, and then when they had fulfilled their statutory duties they would become our problem. There must be a better way forward in this kind of situation; it’s most frustrating.”

8

The customer is always right

Focusing services around the citizen is, alongside shared services, one of the core policies at the heart of the government’s Transformational agenda. In the area of finance, new technologies can allow high degrees of automation whether for governance or for front line services, such as helping citizens to claim and receive benefits, and manage their accounts.

Janice Morphet said: “At the moment we really put people through hoops to find out if they are eligible for benefits. Part of the new changes might be to ensure people get the benefits to which they are entitled. This would start to reverse the way services are delivered to citizens. It would be seen as the government’s job to deliver, not the citizen’s role to have to fill in endless forms and wait for months.”



“It would be seen as the government’s job to deliver, not the citizen’s role to have to fill in endless forms and wait for months.”

Janice Morphet

Keith Davis said: “We need a pure one-stop-shop approach, that says ‘We know how to help you, here is one form to fill in.’ If there is a culture of informing the system once only, we could get all benefits out quicker. The system could spot that as well as benefit A, the citizen applying is also entitled to benefits B, C and D, and it will all be sorted out automatically.”

David Magor said: “We are not that far away even now from being able to offer a comprehensive one-stop shop service, but the person at the front-line will have to be quite smart to interpret the data coming in from all sources, and navigate through all the systems at one point of delivery.”

Janice Morphet said: “From some time between April and December 2006 the Government Connect Citizen Account, a secure single user account to access all official services online, will be live and run by local government, and central government will be invited to sit within it. So eventually we will deliver e-benefits: the technology will be there. So many citizens already have Amazon or Easyjet accounts – why shouldn’t we be doing that with government?”

David Magor said: “I have a vision of people just turning on their digital TV sets, and there is their citizen account. The potential is enormous.”

Keith Davis said: “Media perception does all boil down to good public relations – for example councils often get a bad name for high levels of precepts on the tax that they don’t even control.”

Janice Morphet said: “We are starting to see people recruited into customer services from a business background, and this can create a split between front office and back office. People can see themselves as working for one and not the other: the front office become citizen advocates and the back office stay as they are. So we could be back to silos. What we’re looking at is how to create a consumer focus rather than a producer focus across the board. This is a challenge to all managers, not just directors of finance.”

The topsy-turvy world of fighting fraud

All councils have problems on some scale with council tax evasion, benefits fraud and other forms of financial crime. However the systems in place to detect fraud and prosecute its perpetrators do not always seem to work in effective and logical ways. Future improvements in technology may help through instant data matching across council and other databases.

Robert Della-Sala said: “The fraud detection process in local government is full of conflicts. Most fraud teams are charged with going out to prosecute someone because someone in the Department for Work and Pensions has decided there is a target to hit in that particular area, and so the activity is linked to getting subsidy. On the other hand, if councils just go out and find out about overpayments they have made due to fraud in other areas, they simply lose the money. You do get £3,000 for finding any instance of fraud, but you don’t get any more than £3,000 whatever the size of the case, and you don’t get your overpayments paid back by central government, so the council tax payer ends up subsidising big fraud.



“The fraud detection process in local government is full of conflicts.”

Robert Della-Sala

“So what happens is that councils may choose to go after the easy targets, the grannies who are misclaiming small amounts, rather than the professional fraudsters, who are putting in hundreds of claims.

“Furthermore, once a case comes to court, with the cost of court time, hiring barristers and so on, it isn’t value for money. You haven’t stopped fraud from entering the system – it is reactive to prosecute, not proactive. There needs to be a policy review. Also the council tax rules are too complicated: you could just make the single person rate half the couple rate. It needs to be made much simpler to remove incentives for fraud and make it easier to spot.”



“We had lost sight of the purpose of the rules, to keep the roads clear, not as a means to generate revenue.”

Simon Norbury

Simon Norbury said: “It is a matter of record that Westminster has traditionally used parking enforcement to generate income. But we have had to change our policy after people said ‘Enough is enough’. There were tales of parking wardens behaving inappropriately. We had lost sight of the purpose of the rules, to keep the roads clear, not as a means to generate revenue.

“And we have made improvements with processing: it needs to be quick and easy to pay. In fact, online payment of parking tickets has been our most successful e-government project of all. We have had a huge take-up, even though this is a payment that no-one wants to have to make in the first place. We now receive around 500 payments a day online averaging £60 each, a higher take-up probably than any other local e-government service.”

Robert Della-Sala said: “One in three houses in Hounslow claims to be a single person household, which is nonsense. But there are no good checks for this, they just have to tick a box on a form. And it comes straight off our council tax base.

“The pragmatic approach would be to declare a moratorium on this kind of misclaim, to allow people to admit it. But they know if they did so now they would be forced to court, so they can’t admit they have done anything like started work and not declared it.

“Another problem is that we are not allowed to data match whole databases against each other to look for discrepancies to investigate – you can only match single instances of data to investigate individual claims which seem wrong.”

David Magor said: “The detection process and data matching is going to get better, because data flow is going to improve. Eventually data will be exchanged instantly on individual cases as they arrive: you’ll press a button and it will go to all departments and ask where the mismatches are, for example checking against driver licensing data, and you will receive the response instantly.

“Council tax is too complex, but that’s partly because it was put together in the space of six months to replace poll tax. The system works against the pursuit of fraud, but it will definitely improve.”

Paul Tonks said: “Officers have been told data protection law is scary and they mustn’t get it wrong whatever happens, but in practice it is not so bad.

“Civica has just been commissioned to join up five anti-fraud systems in London, and in our discussions with the Information Commissioner’s Office, they have usually been fine. If you say who is using it, such as five fraud managers at these local authorities, and why they are using it, then they are pretty flexible.

“We already have driver licensing data, and can link fraud and debt and look for people who are consistently and knowledgeably defrauding one council, because the chances are they will be defrauding others too.

“Debt collection companies have a huge amount of information. They know whether it is the fifteenth time they are pursuing someone, but local authorities don’t know.”

“Simple comparison of data between parts of a business, or data cleaning or checking, can also generate huge cost savings, because there is always a data error rate and finding it can really boost efficiency.

“Often however organisations and managers are wary of looking for errors because it can lead to people being blamed for the errors. But if there is not an environment of blame, it can be chased up.”

Keith Davis said: “It is a change in culture for some local authorities to chase debt, and be the big, bad person coming to beat up their communities. They don’t want to get a bad press. So taxpayers have tended to break the rules and get away with it. But if there is a change, and every debt is pursued hard, then attitudes will change. We need to feed it to the PR machine that we need to chase these people or your council tax will go up.”

Paul Tonks said: “The need for education is shared with other enforcement activities, which we’re finding in working with authorities in areas such as anti-social behaviour and parking management. Previous Authority Forum events have also highlighted the need for education programmes as a major plank in local strategy, persuading citizens to comply. Authorities are getting better at raising public perceptions of what they do and why, and this can contribute to the success of specific initiatives such as debt recovery. But you need to keep on top of it which is no small task.”



“Authorities are getting better at raising public perceptions of what they do and why, and this can contribute to the success of specific initiatives.”

Paul Tonks



Conclusion

The finance function in local government is in the middle of a period of significant change. Overall, it is moving from a centralised, top-down, rigid and prescriptive enforcement role to a more devolved, flexible, enabling one. The push towards shared services means finance officers are likely to also face major change in the way they work. Some could be transferred to regional shared services centres, other could remain to set strategic direction and monitor shared or outsourced services instead of delivering it all directly themselves.

New technology systems are likely to underpin all such work, with internet-based systems providing greater flexibility. But as with all technology and change projects, strong leadership will be required to ensure that transitions are smooth, and that there is good communication between senior management and staff both within councils and across all partner bodies for shared services.

The government must play its part: new legislation is needed to ensure finance directors can play their new more flexible roles without falling foul of overly rigid local government finance law. Full review of all relevant law is promised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, with everything on the table.

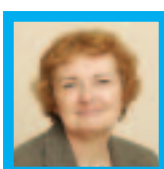
The stakes are high, as we enter this period of change. There are dangers if change is not handled correctly, from low staff morale to IT implementation problems. But if greater flexibility and sharing services are well implemented, many millions of pounds will be saved and, just as importantly, services to the citizen will be much improved.

Attendees

12



Alan Campbell
Chief Executive of
Aberdeenshire
Council



Janice Morphet
Director of RMJM
Consulting



Paul Tonks
Director, Local
Government,
Civica



Keith Davis
Assistant Chief
Executive at
Breckland Council



Simon Norbury
Head of ICT,
Westminster City
Council



Eric Woods
Director of
Government
Practice, Ovum



Robert Della-Sala
Head of Revenues
and Benefits,
London Borough of
Hounslow



Kathryn Rowe
Programme
Manager at the
East of England
Centre of
Excellence



Justin Hunt
Egov writer for
The Guardian



David Magor
Director at IRRV



Mark Say
Editor of
Government
Computing
magazine



Dan Jellinek
Editor of
e-Government
Bulletin

About Civica

The Civica group, which includes Comino plc, is a leader in consulting, software and managed services for the public sector. Supplying many organisations in the UK, Australia and the USA, including 83% of the UK's local authorities, the company has a 20- year history of providing software and services to local government, criminal justice, healthcare and education organisations.

From creating and delivering performance plans to implementing effective IT systems that streamline complex tasks and work processes, Civica blends outcome-based advice, planning and service delivery with a range of systems and services to ease the process of change and to help achieve modern and efficient services.

Efficiency is a priority area for Civica, in activities ranging from a consortium project to establish a performance management framework for ten Scottish councils to helping Australian Local Government Innovation Award winner the City of Whittlesea to achieve transaction savings as high as 79% through e-services.

Consulting

Civica combines practitioner and systems consulting. Led by experienced local government practitioners, its "Authority Solutions" range from corporate support to infrastructure deployment, and focus on:

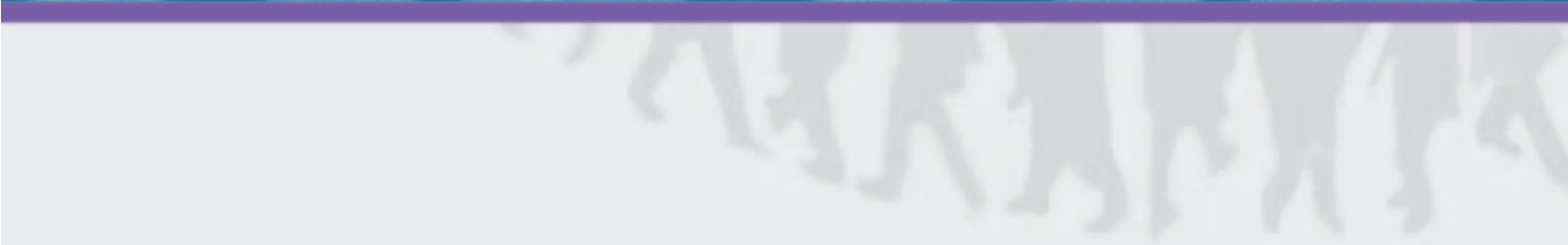
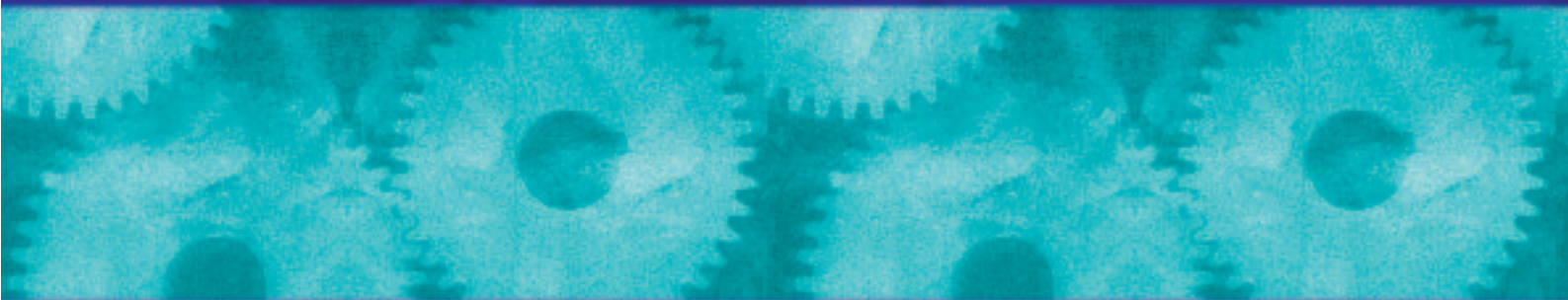
- Performance management
- Funding and procurement support
- Resource support and optimisation
- Process automation and financial efficiency
- IT strategy and efficiency, including e-government and mobile working

Software

Civica provides a comprehensive suite of local government software. Business areas include finance and income management, revenues and benefits, public protection, parking and traffic management, community safety and legal services, together with practical e-services such as e-billing and e-procurement. The company has developed an integrated enterprise model, providing a platform for the future with an enhanced ability to integrate front office and mobile systems with core systems and back end databases.

Managed Services

Civica offers a proven suite of managed services that can be provided as standalone components or under a full and seamless service. The company takes responsibility for systems and infrastructure on behalf of customers, managing software systems along with equipment such as handheld units for optimum performance and convenience. In addition, and combined where appropriate with Civica's consulting services, the company manages and operates supporting processes ranging from bulk printing and correspondence to business service management.



Edited and produced by ItsOpen (www.itsopen.co.uk)

© 2006 Civica plc. All rights reserved.
Product names referenced in this document may be trademarks or registered
trademarks of their respective companies and are hereby acknowledged.